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CHRIST TO RETURN:

A PRACTICAL EXPOSITION

OF THE PROPHECY RECORDED IN THE 24TH AND 25TH CHAPTERS OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW.

WITH A PREFACE,

BY THE

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——— "from thence, He shall COME to judge the quick and the dead."—*Apostles' Creed.*

——— "and He shall COME AGAIN, WITH GLORY,.....whose kingdom shall have no end."—*Nicene Creed.*

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PREFACE.

The following lectures, delivered in the ordinary course of parochial instruction, and now, through the persuasion of many friends, given to the public, present, with equal justness of argument and vigour of thought and style, a subject, which, whether it be viewed with reference to the prominence given it in Holy Writ, or to its direct and manifest influence upon the Christian character, may be pronounced inferior to few others in the whole circle of sanctifying truth—a subject, which, while it diffuses over every feature of the scheme of man's redemption light and life, directs the eye of the believer chiefly to that period, when the glory of this scheme shall be complete, in the visible and universal triumph over sin and death, of the Divine Deliverer.

In proportion as the mind is animated by a persuasion of success, will be its preparedness for vigorous, patient, and untiring exertion. This is felt to be a principle of such efficacy, as to have been called in to sustain effort and quicken zeal in all great undertakings. Even the religion of the Son of God, instinct as it is with almighty energy, has not thought this principle unworthy of its regard, in promoting a spirit of magnanimity and endurance in its friends. If we turn to the birthplace of the Christian faith, we may hear the Divine teacher cheering the hearts of the disciples in their hard conflicts with the world, the flesh and the devil by the promise of being, at last, *more than conquerors.* His first act, as he led them forth, was an act of triumph over the Prince of Darkness*—thus settling their confidence in his power to accomplish the deliverance of his people: while such acts, to the same end, were constantly repeated before their eyes during his earthly ministry.† And when he opened to

* See *temptation* of Christ, Matt. iv.

† Matt. viii, 28; ix, 32, et passim.

them the scenes of bitter trial through which, for his sake, they must pass—scenes so contrary to their hopes, so overwhelming to their fears—he sought to quiet their alarm, and confirm their wavering trust by revealing to them the scenes of glory that would follow:—"Look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh;"* "Let not your hearts be troubled—*I will come again*, and receive you unto myself."† True you shall see me "led as a lamb to the slaughter."‡ Though "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows,"§ and a victim of the most cruel sufferings—bleeding at every pore and writhing in every limb, yet unappalled at the fearful expiation, I shall proceed "to give my back to the smiters,"‖ "my flesh for the life of the world."¶ Yes, you must witness "the hour and the power of darkness;" but "let not your heart be troubled," the day of my exaltation and of your rejoicing

* Luke xxi, 28.
† John xiv, 1—3.
‡ Is. liii, 7.
§ Ibid. liii, 3.
‖ Ibid. l, 6.
¶ John vi, 51.

hastens. Soon you shall see me lay aside the priestly garments, the badges of my bloody sacrifice, my deep humiliation; and gird on the sword of my might. "Death shall be swallowed up in my victory;"* and in the face of a gazing world I will ascend, "leading captivity captive,"† to "the place of my glory." Nor is this all: *I will come again;* and this very earth which is to witness the scene of my agony, and hear the cry of my distress, shall yet behold the brightness of my coming,‡ and bend beneath the sceptre of my kingdom.§ True, "you shall be called before governors and kings for my sake;" "yea, the time cometh, when he that killeth you, will think that he doeth God service."‖ But "let not your heart be troubled;" I *will come again:* will come unto *you:* will endue you with "the *spirit of my glory:*"¶ "will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay

* 1 Cor. xv, 54. † Eph. iv, 8.

‡ 2 Thess. ii, 8.

§ Is. ix, 7; lxiii, passim. Phil. ii, 10. Rev. i, 7.

‖ John xvi, 2. ¶ 1 Pet. iv, 14.

nor resist."* "No weapon formed against you shall prosper."† Yes, "I will *come again*, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."‡ "Ye have followed me, and in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."§ Such is the enrapturing view unfolded by our Lord to his sorrowing disciples; such the bright vision of final victory, under power of which, he left them "to contend earnestly for the faith." The effect was such as might have been looked for. No sooner had he ascended, than the voice of these very disciples, just now sunk in despondency, is raised, as if in echo of his own exulting strain, to the highest note of encouragement. The timid are nerved, the sluggish aroused, the recreant filled with terror, by constant and thrilling appeals to the fact, that "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh:" that He who once "came to visit us in great humility," would soon return

* Luke xxi, 15.
† Is. liv, 17.
‡ John xvi, 22.
§ Matt. xix, 28.

in all the majesty of his Godhead, "to call the world from the rising up of the sun to the going down thereof: *first*, to gather together his saints unto Him in his everlasting kingdom; and *then* to adjudge the wicked and impenitent to the horrors of an endless punishment.*

And when death had stifled this voice of the apostles, the call upon the suffering Christians still is, "Look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh;" "look up" in confident assurance, that "the triumph of the wicked shall be short;" in patient reliance upon the promise, that He who is known to be "the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead," will ere long visibly descend, "to reign in righteousness on the earth." This consideration, so full of triumph in itself and of power over the pious mind, seems in fact to have operated with marvellous efficacy upon the primitive saints. "When the holy Father," says Jerome, "began to discourse to them, after

* 1 Thess. v, 2, 3, 4. Acts xx, 32. 2 Tim. iv, 8. 2 Pet. iii, 11 to end. Rev. last two chapters.

their devotions, they listened with profound silence and veneration. His words deeply affected their hearts. Their eyes overflowed with tears; and the speaker's commendation was the weeping of his hearers. Yet no one's grief expressed itself in an indecent manner. But when he came to discourse of the *kingdom of Christ, and the glory of the world to come*, then one might observe how each hearer, with a moderate sigh and eyes upraised to heaven, said within himself, "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest."*

It comes not within my present limits, even had I the means, to enter minutely into the causes, which have long been operating, with different degrees of force, to lower the tone of Christian confidence in the *personal reign of Messiah upon earth;* or to make this reign a subject of such rare and feeble presentation to the people of our charge. To my mind, how-

* Hier. Ep. xxii, c. 15. Vide Cypriani De Exhort. Martyrii, cap. i, s. 12, and S. Justini Marty. Dial. p. 177—178, 179—212.

ever, it is sufficiently clear, that one of these causes may be traced to an event of very early date in the history of the Church; viz. the almost universal change of opinion on the subject of the millennium;* wrought with prodigious dexterity, while the eye of the Church was averted to the scene of a more vital conflict, by the able but mystic school of Origen, during the first of the fourth century, and wrought too by an attack, rather upon the *absurd fancies* of the Millennaries, than upon their *arguments*.† Without stopping to inquire how far this change is to be considered, in accordance with "the truth as it is in Jesus," (a change, thank God, not sanctioned by the Thirty-nine Articles as it *was* by the articles of Edward,)‡ we may, I think, without much labour,

* "That doctrine," [the millennium,] says Chillingworth, "was believed and taught by the most eminent Fathers of the age next to the apostles, and opposed by none." p. 713. See also his list of the Fathers who maintained it, and Eusebius, passim.

† See Chillingworth, p. 717.

‡ See Coll. Eccl. His., vol. ii, Record lxvi, art. xli: also Burnet on Articles.

clearly discern traces of its evil influence, through the ages all along, from the fourth to the present century, in the effectual discouragement which has uniformly met every attempt to revive in the Church an anticipation of the glorious era, "when the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the saints of the Most High God;"* and *especially* in the increasing prevalence of that system of Scripture interpretation, which strips all those passages containing an explicit promise of "the coming of the Son of man in his glory, or his kingdom," of that import, so awfully and universally interesting to mankind; by restricting their application mainly to "the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman arms."† Hence THE TWENTY-FOURTH CHAPTER OF ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL, replete with solemn lessons to *all* people, in *all* ages, is now, through the refinements of false criticism, read or listened to by most

* Dan. vii, 27.

† See the masterly sermons of Bishop Horsley on this subject.

persons, as an affecting page merely, in the history of events long since passed. The main object of these lectures is so to apply the results of critical study, as to furnish some impulse and aid towards the important work of restoring to its proper influence in the Church, this soul stirring prophecy of the Son of God; and thus of strengthening in the minds of all its members, the anticipation of an event in which all are so vitally concerned.

Able writers, it is true, have, at sundry times, maintained, in all its essential particulars, the interpretation here set forth as the true one: the only disagreement occurring on the questions asked by the disciples in the third verse of the afore-mentioned chapter. This disagreement, however, it will be perceived, is in no way important, as it regards the *practical* bearing of the prophecy. Tertullian, Calvin, Beza, Lightfoot,* and others of less note, regard these

* While Dr. Lightfoot refers the *questions* to *two* events, it must be acknowledged that he is disposed to restrict the *answer* of the Saviour to *one*, viz. *the destruction of Jerusalem.*

questions as referring to *two* events, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the advent of Christ in the *regeneration*, according to the Jewish expectation. S. Cyprian, S. Cyril of Jerusalem, Bishops Porteus and Horsley, Heinsius, Clarke, Gilpin, and the framers of our Liturgy, refer them also to *two* events; but in place of the advent "to reign a thousand years," they substitute the last advent to judgment. Grotius, Mede, the Westminster divines, Wetstein, Rosenmuller, Kuinoel, Schleusner, Bishop Wilson, Taylor and Hale,* refer them to all *three* of the events above named. But whatever may be the truth in this matter, the *practical* result, I repeat, is not materially altered. According to either hypothesis, the prophecy teaches mankind to look for its fulfilment in the *future*—to look, at no very distant period, "for the glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ;"† and to believe, that "unto them

* Dr. Hale's remarks upon this subject are well worthy of attention—see his Anal. Chron. vol. iii, p. 560 to 592.

† Tit. ii, 13.

who look for Him," that is, in humble, joyful hope, "shall he appear the second time without sin, unto salvation."* Still, in the face of all this ability, reaching back to the very days of the apostles, another hypothesis, essentially modern, seems to have obtained too general favour —an hypothesis which restricts the grandest and most effective prophecy of the Son of God —a prophecy conveyed under more awful imagery, and in a tone of deeper warning than any other—to an event of comparatively trifling moment. It is true this hypothesis has the sanction of a few powerful names†—names

* Heb. ix, 28.

† Among these names are found those of Drs. Hammond and Whitby, the former of whom has furnished in his life, by Bishop Fell, the most finished human model of a Christian pastor; while the latter has, in his Commentary on the New Testament, *generally*, strengthened the cause of *apostolic interpretation*, notwithstanding his departure from this standard in the instance above cited; and, in my view, his eminent failure in the elaborate treatise on the millennium, a failure to be ascribed mainly to the fact of his having argued rather against the *misrepresentations* of the adversaries of the millennarians,

which in other cases are found to favour only those interpretations conducted according to the Catholic rule of Vincentius—still, it is always safer to listen to the voice of the Church primitive and Catholic, than to the voice of two or three of even her most skilful sons. Strong and united efforts, therefore, appear yet to be wanting to bring back the minds of Christians to the primitive and evangelical doctrine of

—"whose doctrine," to use the words of Chillingworth, "was overborne by imputing to them that which they *held not*"—than against the doctrine itself, as received from the apostles. In this remark, however, I am not to be considered as entering the lists as a champion of the millennarians; but simply as intimating a caution, how we reject, as a *Jewish fable*, a doctrine held by Papias, "the hearer of St. John, and familiar friend of Polycarp," as says Irenæus (Con. Haer. l. v, c. 33) by *Nopos*, Bishop of Egypt, and *Victorinus*, as says Jerome, (Pref. de Corn. Victor.) by *Justin*, the able apologist of the Church and *martyr*, by *Irenæus*, the holy Bishop of Lyons, by *Melito*, Bishop of Sardis, and *Apollinarius* and *Tertullian*—the most eminent men of the age next to that of the apostles; and held by them as *witnesses merely of the apostolic tradition.*

"the coming of the Son of man in his kingdom." Much, it is true, has been done, and *ably* done; yet in a manner, to render a *popular* treatise on the subject greatly to be desired. Whether this desideratum is supplied in the present work, is a question, the answer of which must be left to the judgment of the Church of Christ. Thus much, however, I will hazard, concerning the work itself—that it places in a clear and deeply impressive light, one of the most difficult, and at the same time, most solemn and interesting portions of God's Word: and also thus much concerning the views of the author—that, if the circulation of these pages shall bring to his mind evidence of their instrumentality, under the divine blessing, in converting one sinner from the error of his ways, or in imparting to one weary Christian, courage and patience to endure unto the end, he will devoutly thank God for so rich a reward of his labour.

L. SILLIMAN IVES.

SYNOPSIS OF THE PROPHECY.

As he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the SIGN of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

To preserve his disciples from mistaking for "signs of his coming and of the end of the world," occurrences which must be *before* the end came," the Saviour begins, by naming some of these occurrences; viz.

1. The rise of adventurers who would claim to be the Christ and might be mistaken for Jesus of Nazareth re-appearing.

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am [the] Christ; and shall deceive many.

2. Outbreaks in nature and among nations.

And ye shall hear of wars, and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

3. Trials to the Church.

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall

rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

4. The announcement of the Gospel to all nations.

And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

5. Destruction to the Holy City.

When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judea [not look upon the occurrence as what must provoke the Messiah to appear, for the deliverance of his chosen people; but on the contrary, take to flight] flee into the mountains. Let him which is on the house-top not come down to take any thing out of his house. Neither let him which is in the field, return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath-day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time; no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo! Here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold! I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold! He is in the desert; go not forth: Behold! He is in the secret chambers, believe it not. For, as the lightning cometh out of the East, and shineth even unto the West; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For, wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

6. Prolonged disaster and desolation to the Holy Land.*

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from Heaven, and the powers of the Heavens shall be shaken.

The Saviour proceeds, by declaring that "the sign of his coming and of the end of the world"—"the sign of the Son of Man"—may be looked for when the occurrences just mentioned shall all have come to pass; and not before.

And THEN shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn; and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet; and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the other.

——— *applies* the doctrine he had taught concerning "things which must be before the end comes."

Now learn a parable of the fig-tree: When his branch is

* Compare this part of the prophecy as it stands at Luke xxi, 24-26. "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth [the land] distress [or, conflict] of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth [the land]." The reader will not think it an unwarrantable liberty to understand the Holy Land as meant by "the earth," if aware that in the antiquated language of the English Bible, the expression "the earth" is used where the modern custom of our tongue would oblige us to say "the land"—"the country." Rom. ix, 28, affords a plain example; and Johnson in proof of this sense quotes from Dryden—

"In ten set battles have we driven back
These heathen Saxons, and regained our earth."

They who read the Greek, do not need to be told that the original of the passage is quite capable of such sense.

yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

—— predicts that the seed or generation he addresses shall survive all "these things."

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

—— declares his return will take men by surprise.

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of Heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark; and knew not, until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

—— predicts a rending of the most intimate relations.

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the miil; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

—— compares his disciples—1. To a man whose house was to suffer attack.

Watch, therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.

2. To a head-servant.

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil

servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

3. To ten virgins.

Then shall the kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage [supper]: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.

4. To dependents entrusted with capital.

The Kingdom of Heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received five talents, went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received

two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one, went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time, the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents, came, and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents; behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent, came, and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed? Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath, shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The Saviour concludes, by depicting the scene to take place at his return.

When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he

shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

LECTURES.

LECTURE I.

MATTHEW xxiv. 3—22.

"As he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

"And ye shall hear of wars, and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my

name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

"When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains. Let him which is on the house-top not come down to take any thing out of his house. Neither let him which is in the field, return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath-day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

But a few days before our Lord closed his earthly career, he denounced against the chosen

people, Divine vengeance. He declared, that upon that generation should be visited, as it were, all the righteous blood shed upon the earth—that their house should be left unto them desolate—the beautiful, sacred, time-honoured temple becoming a ruin, one stone in it not left upon another.

The Israelite, in his feeling national to a fault, had little belief that the city or temple of his forefathers could be overthrown except with the overthrow of the world. It was part of his creed, that great calamities would precede the manifestation of the Messiah.* Hence, he inquired in one breath, "When shall these things be? What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

In answer to this inquiry about his second coming, the Saviour uttered the famous prophecy contained in the 24th and 25th chapters of St. Matthew. By way of rectifying the mistake of his disciples, their notion that the end of the world would be coincident with the end of the temple, he began the speech by mentioning

* Rosenmuller on Matt. xxiv. 7.

manifold occurrences to take place before his re-appearance at the last day—false pretensions to the Messiahship, commotions, sore trials to the Church, the announcement of the Gospel to all nations, the destruction of Jerusalem, danger of delusion, protracted disaster to the Holy Land.

Imperfect and dark as the spiritual understanding of the disciples thus far was—full as they were of the notion, that the Christ, sooner or later, must manifest himself as a king of this world—little dreaming that there could be any considerable length of time to intervene between the first and second comings of the Master—they ran great risk of being constantly imposed upon. Should any adventurer in some distant part of the country, give out he was the Christ, and answer at all to the description with which their minds were prepossessed as belonging to this predicted personage—the more ignorant of the Christian Jews (not well understanding that the Messiah, at his second coming, would shine forth with Heavenly glory) might easily be deluded into the belief, that this ad-

venturer was the Son of Man, the true Messiah reappearing according to his promise.

Such adventurers did arise. Age after age, the Jewish people have been carried away with deceivers, claiming to be the long-promised Deliverer. In that very generation, before the men to whom Jesus now spake were laid in their graves, Simon, of Samaria,* gave out that himself was some great one. The people all gave heed to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God." What means this, unless Simon claimed to be "the Wonderful," promised by ancient prophecy? Some twelve years after Christ's death, a certain Theudas† imposed upon, it is possible, by his own enthusiasm, persuaded great numbers of people to follow him to the Jordan, assuring them that at his commandment the river would divide into two parts. How could he have thought of such a thing, had he not imagined himself Him that was to come—that "Branch to arise unto David, in whose day the Lord would not only destroy the tongue of the

* Acts viii. 9. † Josephus, Antiquities xx. 5. 1.

Egyptian sea, but also with his mighty wind, shake his hand over the river and make men go over dry-shod."

To guard his people against such, deceivers of the public, or deceivers of themselves, the Saviour foretold their PRETENSIONS—stated such claims or impostures, as among the events not to be mistaken for signs of his coming. "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, 'I am Christ,' and shall deceive many."

The caution, modern disciples, does not need to be urged upon you. You are unlikely to be imposed upon by false claimants to the Messiahship; for to you various declarations of your Lord have made it plain, that when the Deliverer reappears, it is to be—not after the manner of an adventurer, a pretender to worldly kingship. He is to be revealed from Heaven, in cloud and flaming fire, like the lightning which cometh out of the East and shineth even unto the West, impossible to be mistaken!

There is said to obtain among the Jews, even

to this day, the custom, when a thunder-storm occurs, of opening their windows, in expectation of the Messiah's appearance. However this may be, certain it is, that the popular belief of this people has long been that the appearance of the Christ is to be signalized and preceded by commotions, violent disturbances, either in the human or in the inanimate world. "Do you see kingdom rising against kingdom? Then behold, look at the foot of the Messiah,"* says a Jew whose book is in repute among his people.

The Saviour wished to put down this superstition, to extinguish this groundless notion, among those Jews who had come over to him as disciples. He would not that their hopes should be raised and disappointed, at every fresh outbreak of nature, or of nations. And hence, among the number of events not to be mistaken for signs of his reappearing, he named COMMOTIONS. "Ye shall hear of wars, and rumours of wars: see that ye be not trou-

* R. Eleasar, quoted by Rosenmuller on Mat. xxiv. 7.

bled: all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are but the beginning of sorrows"—only a foretaste, an earnest, of what may be expected in after times.

Be not moved then, hearers, if at any time the news of the day be shocking. Do the gazettes tell you of insurrections, of grave rebellions? Do you year of tornado, earthquake, meteoric wonder? Do you find some of the various calculations about the time of the advent, laying stress on these occurrences? Disregard them. Lay to mind your Lord's words, "These things must be, but the end is not yet." Remember, that as in the time of Elijah, a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks, but the Lord was not in the wind—and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake—and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was

not in the fire—so, somewhat so, at least, it may be expected to be in the day of the Son of Man.

The twelve, and the others who, during the time of our Saviour's earthly ministry, espoused his cause, little dreamed of *suffering* to be endured on the Christ's account. They conceived they were securing for themselves unqualified blessing, earthly blessing. If they were taught the contrary, by occasional taunts from the Pharisees, by being "put out of the synagogue," they conceived, probably, that this trifling disgrace would be very short-lived. Soon the Messiah would appear in his kingdom, in such Monarchic or Godlike glory as he had assumed on the mount of transfiguration; and then they, posted at the right of his throne, employed on honouring embassies, would be abundantly, and before death, compensated for their trifling sufferings. Little did they think that the long-promised Deliverer would be an occasion to his followers of arraignment, death —protracted ignominy.

Poor people! They were undeceived in time. To disabuse their minds, to bring them to "count the cost," to give them opportunity, if they felt disposed, to return to the world, they were now solemnly told of SORE TRIALS, of persecutions, of mutual betrayals, of impostures within their own community—all to come before their Master's coming in glory—all to last, for aught they knew, their whole life long. "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. Then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."

Thanks unto God! The bitterest, the hottest of the ordeal thus foretold to happen to the Christian Church before her Lord's return, we may—may we not—regard as past. What, if now and then, Christ's modern people encounter scoffs? They are not now, on account of their religion, arraigned before the civil magis-

trate; they are not now tempted, for the sake of reward or bribe, to betray one another; they are not now subverted in their faith by a Mahomet or an Arius. Christian brethren! while for this mercy you bless God, take care lest it become a snare to you. If, because iniquity in the form of persecution then abounded, the love of many in the primitive ages waxed cold, the love of many now-a-days, it is too probable, waxeth cold, because iniquity in this form does *not* abound. Many a man whom opposition would only confirm in devotedness to Christ, by the want of opposition, is lulled, set to sleep. Our sea now-a-days is calm. We meet few headwinds. We have no storms. God grant our blessing may not prove our curse, our peace a lullaby!

How pitiable the state of the Heathen! Something of God, and the soul, and immortality, they may know. Reason, tradition, nature, have taught it to them. But the great truth, that there comes a day when God shall judge the world by that man whom he hath

ordained—that the Son of God is about to reappear in our globe, to recover it, long lost, long swayed by Satan, to his own dominion—that the God of Heaven is about to set up in this planet a kingdom which shall never be destroyed—the glad tidings, which this Scripture calls "the Gospel of the Kingdom"—the Heathen know not. Will, then, the Christ, when he comes in his kingdom, come upon the Heathen entirely unawares? Is it not fit that they should have some witness, some attestation of this great event to come? Our hearts say Yes.

So, likewise, says this prophecy of Christ. For what nameth he as the great antecedent of his coming to take unto him his great power, and to reign? "THIS GOSPEL of the kingdom shall be preached IN ALL THE WORLD, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

Whether the end of the present state of things shall follow *immediately* upon the publication of the Gospel to the Heathen nations, we know not. "Then," may mean 'at that very hour,' or it may mean 'about that time,'

'not before that day.' The language is indefinite, and no doubt was made so of purpose.

Neither yet do we know whether the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom will be made to all *individuals*—though one would think this must be the sense intended. The language is, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all *nations*." The meaning may be merely, that no land, no *country*, shall be unvisited by the Heavenly message.

To his statement of occurrences to intervene before his second coming—his prediction of false Messiahs, of commotions, of sore trials to the Church, of the universal promulgation of his Gospel—the Saviour joins a PREMONITION RESPECTING THE FORTUNES OF JERUSALEM.

Long before the time of Christ, Daniel, captive at Babylon, had put on record the enigmatical sayings—"The people of the prince that shall come, shall destroy the city, and the sanctuary." "From the time the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that

maketh desolate, set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days." Accordingly, against the city and the sanctuary, Jerusalem and the temple, there came, in time, a prince and his people. In the year* of our Lord 69, the army of Heathen Rome (an "abomination," because of their idolatrous practices, "a desolation," because wherever they went the land became a waste) encompassed, with their fortifications, the sacred city of David.

Terrible was the distress—unparallelled the perplexity, which ensued to Judea. Great was the danger—the Jews being of the belief that commotions would usher in the Messiah—lest those of this people who had become converts to Jesus of Nazareth, instead of seeking to save themselves by timely flight, might, in an unwarranted confidence, lie still; do nothing for their own deliverance. This danger the Saviour anticipated—and hence his admonition, prophetic, yet distinct as History, "When ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken

* Jahn's History of Heb. Commonwealth, sect. 143.

of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the Holy Land,* then let them which be in Judea, flee unto the mountains. Let him which is on the house-top not come down to take any thing out of his house. Neither let him which is in the field, return back to take his clothes. Woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath-day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elects' sake those days shall be shortened."

Punctually, to the very letter, was the whole fulfilled. Did Jesus, by way of intimating how immediate would be the danger—how pressing the necessity for instant flight, warn the Jews, if in the field at the appearance of the enemy, not to return home—if on the house-top, not to come down, but leap from roof to roof till they

* Luke xxi. 20. "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies."

should gain the city wall? Josephus—an unexceptionable witness, a Jew, but not a Christian Jew—declares (I quote his very words) "Vespasian had now fortified all the places round about Jerusalem. . . . . And those that were at Jerusalem were deprived of the liberty of going out of the city. . . . . The army kept them in by encompassing the city round about on all sides."* The opportunity of escape, it is plain then, was short. From the time Jerusalem began to be thus compassed about with armies, no moment was to be lost. Any who contemplated flight, but had not already effected it,† might find an hour's delay fatal to their hopes.

Did the Divine prophet, in order to picture the miseries of such as should not be able to effect escape, pronounce, "Woe to them that

* Josephus, Jewish War, iv. 9. 1.

† Eusebius (Ecclesiastical History, 3. 5.) declares, "The whole body of the Church at Jerusalem, having been commanded by a Divine revelation, given to men of approved piety there before the war, removed from the city and dwelt at a certain town beyond the Jordan, called Pella."

are with child, and to them that give suck in those days?" The same historian declares that —such was the distress in the city, "Multitudes of women and children perished by famine."* "Mothers snatched food from the mouths of their children."† One Mary, daughter to Eleazar, illustrious for family and riches—with her own hands slew her sucking child—boiled the infant's flesh—devoured half herself—and with hysteric bitterness, offered the other half to soldiers!‡

Were Christ's hearers to pray that their flight might not be in the winter, nor on the sabbath-day—lest the state of the weather or their scrupulousness of conscience should prevent their going far—far enough to be out of harm's way? The fact turned out accordingly.§ No spot within a sabbath-day's journey of Jerusalem was a place of safety. The whole country was in arms.

* Josephus, Jewish War, v. 12. 3.

† Josephus, Jewish War, v. 10. 3.

‡ Josephus, Jewish War, vi. 3. 4.

§ Josephus, Jewish War, iv. 9. 1.

Did the Christ declare, "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not from he beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be?" The Jew Josephus—as though he had had it in view to verify the prophecy—writes in so many words, "If the misfortunes of all from the beginning of the world were compared with those of the Jews, they would seem to fall short."* "No other city ever suffered such things."†

Did the prediction proceed, "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved?" Brethren! when we read the accounts of the siege of Jerusalem—the account of the Pagan Tacitus, the account of the Jew Josephus—we hear of such stores of provision laid up within the city—we meet, page after page, such proofs of indomitable obstinacy on the part alike of the invaders and the invaded—the war seems destined to last for years: we see not but it must continue till all flesh in the country shall be extir-

* Josephus, Jewish War, preface, sect. 4.

† Josephus, Jewish War, v. 10. 5.

pated: we are surprised—we trace the hand of God—we acknowledge a wondrous fulfilment to this prophecy of Jesus—when we find the war brought to a close, within a year from the commencement of the siege! For the sake of his elect, his darling pious, God (who rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm, who maketh even the wrath of man to praise him) shortened, unexpectedly, a war which otherwise had been a war of extirpation.

Behold, brethren! a glorious token of your master's truth in his promise of a second coming. In the midst of a prophecy about that coming, you find an incidental prophecy of invasion to the Holy Land—of siege and destruction to Jerusalem and its temple. This latter prophecy, already and incontestably, has been accomplished. The ruins of Jerusalem, now remaining, are monuments of its fulfilment. All history—the Pagan Tacitus—the Jew Josephus, not less unequivocally than the Christian writer—are witnesses to its exact completion, even in minor circumstances.

Yet—who can deny it—in order to be able to foresee this desolation of the Holy city, Jesus must have had an illumination more than human. Near forty years before Jerusalem came to be compassed about with armies, not only was his prediction uttered—himself had died. At that day the temple seemed as durable—Jerusalem as likely to continue—as London, Paris, Philadelphia, now does. The subversion of the Jewish state was an event in itself quite as improbable as is the return to earth of Jesus Christ—his reappearing to take unto him his great power and to reign.

Since then my master truly foretold the one event, I trust his foretelling of the other. Yes—here is the foothold for my soul—here my warrant for hope to hear a trump, which, at once shall awake me from the tomb and announce the reappearing of my Lord—here the anchor to my spirit, my certainty that as Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, so to them that look for him he shall appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation!

LECTURE II.

MATTHEW xxiv. 23—31.

"Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo! Here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold! I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold! He is in the desert; go not forth: Behold! He is in the secret chambers, believe it not. For, as the lightning cometh out of the East, and shineth even unto the West; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For, wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from Heaven, and the powers of the Heavens shall be shaken.

"And THEN shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth

mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory. And He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet; and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the other.

The earlier part of this prophecy we considered on the morning of the last Lord's day. The case we found to stand thus:

The Saviour predicted the ruin of the temple. The by-standing disciples—who were Jews—could not conceive that this ruin would ever take place, except with the ruin of the world. And hence they eagerly inquired, "When shall these things be? What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?" In answer, and by way of giving them to understand that much was yet to happen before his coming or the end of the world, the Redeemer foretold the appearance of adventurers pretending to his office—gave warning of manifold commotions—predicted chilling trials to his Church—stated an eminent antecedent to his reappearance, the announcement of his Gospel to the nations universally—and then, lest at the

approach of overthrow to the temple, his people might lie still, not saving themselves by flight, because expectant of their Master's return to overthrow the whole world, admonished his hearers, when they should "see the abomination of desolation in the Holy Land," to flee unto the mountains, making no avoidable delay.

At this point—at the incidental prediction of destruction to Jerusalem, Christ insists, a second time, upon THE DANGER OF DELUSION.

We alleged, a minute ago, that when Jerusalem came to be compassed about with armies, the probability was that many of its citizens would trust to the Messiah's immediate appearance; and—their fears quieted by this fond trust—would remain in the city till escape was impossible. The probability turned out a fact. For what are the words of the Heathen historian, Tacitus, when he relates the story of Jerusalem's desolation? "Few were alarmed. The most were possessed with a persuasion it was contained in prophecies in the hands of their priests, that *at that very time* the East

would become potent, and the offspring of Judea attain to empire."*

To preserve *his disciples* from such delusion—from supposing, that in the hour of his ancient people's punishment, himself would appear for their relief—Jesus told his hearers, that if at that juncture, claimants to the Messiahship should appear (as they no doubt did), even if to substantiate their claims, they should perform acts having the appearance of miracles, they were not to be believed, not to be mistaken for the true Christ reappearing—that that reappearance would be beyond all that impostors could counterfeit—peculiar—unmistakeable—like the lightning of Heaven; that it would be as it were omnipresent, visible wherever there were objects for judgment—the carcase being no more sure to be found by the vulture or eagle, than the sinner to be found by his judge. "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. There shall arise false Christs, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that (if it

* Tacitus, Hist., v. 13.

were possible) they shall deceive the very elect. If they shall say unto you, 'Behold, he is in the desert;' go not forth: 'Behold, he is in the secret chambers;' believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the East, and shineth even unto the West; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

Weigh well this last saying, impenitent fellow men! There will be no escaping, no hiding from the reappearing Saviour. In the extremity of your anguish—your fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation, you may wish yourself annihilated: you may cry to the rocks to fall on you and hide you from the wrath of the Lamb. Alas, in vain! Can the carcase escape the presence of the bird of prey? Will not its stench betray it—bring down upon the loathsome mass the talons of the vulture? Has not the God of nature given to this fowl the corpse for its portion—established a connection between the two, so that where one is to taint the atmosphere, the other shall be to make away

with the pollution? That same Being hath given warning—when they shall say, Peace and Safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, and they shall not escape. Be sure your sin shall find you out. The Lord hath made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked, for the day of wrath!

The Son of God foretold (as another antecedent of his second coming, and as immediately to succeed the tribulations of Jerusalem)

A PERIOD OF CURSE UPON THE COUNTRY.

In the early ages of the world—when mankind were as yet ignorant, in infancy as it were, strange appearances in the Heavens were understood as tokens of impending calamity. They were deemed signs of divine indignation, and struck all hearts with panic. Was the sun eclipsed—the moon obscured? Were falling stars seen? Armies refused to go to battle. Whole nations turned pale. All with one voice agreed that the Deity was angered—disasters were impending—the Divine curse was abroad.

Hence, perhaps, it was that strange appear-

ances in the Heavens—a darkened sun, an eclipsed and bloodlike moon—came to be used by poets and animated speakers as *figures*, images expressive of curse and disaster.

The Prophet Isaiah entitles one of his prophecies, "the Burden of Babylon." It is a prediction* of Divine curse upon the city of Nebuchadnezzar. The amount of it is, that Babylon, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as Sodom and Gomorrah—shall never be inhabited, neither dwelt in from generation to generation. Yet, how does the earlier part of the passage run? "The day of the Lord cometh, cruel with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate. For the stars of Heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light. The sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine."

Our Lord, like Isaiah, was a prophet. He spoke to the same nation—used the same language—humanly speaking, was accustomed to

* Isaiah xiii. 9, 10. See also Ezekiel xxxii. 7, 8. Daniel viii. 10. Joel ii. 30, 31.

the same habits of thought. When then—passing from prediction of the overthrow of the city and temple of Jerusalem—our Lord declares "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from Heaven, and the powers of Heaven shall be shaken,"—we are at no loss for his meaning. He employs a figure, an *image*, importing curse and protracted disaster to the country whose inhabitants he addressed. Nay, he has himself thus explained his meaning, for though Matthew is brief, Luke is full. The latter gives this item in our Saviour's prophecy at length—writing as our Lord's words. "They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars. And upon the land distress of nations, with perplexity—the sea and the waves warring—men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming

on the land;* for the powers of Heaven shall be shaken."

Pause—Brethren! Have we not here a prediction of prolonged disaster—enduring calamity, to the chosen people and their country, as a while ago we had of destruction to their city? Ask yourselves now, which one of these things that Jesus of Nazareth spake, hath not had, or is not having, abundant accomplishment? Which one of the miseries betokened by the darkened sun and such like figure, failed? Was it the saying, "They shall be led away captive into all nations?" History answers,† Of the ninety-seven thousand taken prisoners in the war, the fairest and tallest were reserved to grace the Roman conqueror's triumphal entry into Rome: Some were sent to Egypt to work in the mines; those under seventeen years, were sold; the mass were dispersed through the Roman provinces, to be destroyed in their theatres by the sword or by wild beasts. Has the say-

* Rosenmuller on the passage, and Robinson's Lexicon.

† Josephus, Jewish War, vi. 9. 2, 3.

ing, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled," failed of accomplishment? My brethren, from that day to this, the city of Jerusalem has been under the mastery of various nations—Romans—Turks—Christians; but not of the seed of Israel. If the Jew has lived there at all, it has been by sufferance—though it is the only place upon earth where he counts himself not a foreigner; the only spot on the globe where he can offer the worship required by his law;* the abode to which his religion and his patriotism conspire to bind his affections with a tie known to the children of no other country. The site where its sacred temple once reared its head, one hundred and thirty years after Christ, was occupied by a sanctuary in honour of Jupiter, and profaned by Pagan sacrifices.† A few years later, in cruel derision of the national feeling, a *hog*, sculptured in marble, was

* See Deuteronomy xii. 10—14. Compared with 1 Kings xiv. 21.

† Authorities quoted by Bishop Newton on the Prophecies, Dissertation xx, part 3.

set upon one of the city gates*—and by order of a Gentile, all Jews, on pain of death, were forbidden to enter inside of the town.† In the early part of the fourth century, the seed of Israel attempted to rebuild the temple: Gentiles, trampling down Jerusalem, not only prevented, but punished the patriotic endeavour.‡ Nay—most remarkable of all—some years later, Julian, the Apostate,§ with view to mortify the Christians and prove Jesus a deceiver, encouraged the Jews to proceed in the building, contributed largely to the expenses, and appointed an officer of his own to superintend and expedite the work. He that sitteth in the Heaven laughed him to scorn! The Lord had him in derision! For, lo!—the Pagan historian relates it, not less unequivocally than the Christian—*fire* (perhaps from subterranean caverns, in which the air, long confined, had become in-

* Authorities quoted by Bishop Newton on the Prophecies, Dissertation xx, part 3.

† Ibid. ‡ Ibid.

§ See an impartial view of this matter, in Waddington's Church History, p. 108.

flammable) burst forth—killed the labourers—put to the undertaking a total and calamitous stop.

What shall I say more? Shall I remind you of the time of the Crusades, when Jerusalem was the battle ground of Turk and Christian—Gentiles, who joined only in hating and persecuting the descendant of its ancient inhabitants? Shall I recall to your thoughts how, four or five years ago, our own countryman, Stephens, found the Jews confined to a miserable corner of the city—poor, squalid, degraded, scarcely daring to show their faces among the Gentile residents, their masters? No. You need no more to show how fully your Saviour's prediction has been fulfilled. You behold the seal set to the veracity of Christ. You mark that for ages, Judea's sun has been darkened—her country under curse—her people's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which were coming on the land. You challenge the Infidel to explain how Jesus of Nazareth (if less or other than he claimed to be) could foresee this series

of disasters, this protracted curse upon the country.

Believer! your faith stands upon a rock. Well may you put up with the troubles of this earthly scene—well be content, for conscience sake, to take suffering, derision, detriment to worldly interest—well live a pilgrim and a sojourner, expecting a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens—*since* He who made the promise or prophecy to come again and take you to himself, has given you, in earnest of his truth, not only his spotless character, and his well attested resurrection, but this unambiguous, distinct, and completely verified prediction of the fortunes of the Holy Land.

The Saviour having striven to unhinge the minds of his hearers from the notion on which their thoughts were turning—the notion that the end of the world must be as near as the end of the temple, at last names CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS SECOND COMING.

"Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in the Heavens: and then shall all the

tribes of the earth mourn." 'Then'—what does the word mean? 'At that moment'—? Undoubtedly it does *not*. For Christ had not been speaking of a moment, but of a protracted *period*, the period of darkened sun and eclipsed moon—of curse and disaster to Judea.

Neither is it certain Christ meant, "In that period"—unless at least you suppose that the times appointed to the Gentiles, the times in which Jerusalem is to be trodden down of the Gentiles, are to last until his reappearing.

The meaning, no doubt, is "not before." 'You understand not—you expect my return prematurely—many things are first to happen. Your national sun is to be long darkened. Then—not before—shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in the Heavens. The tribes of the earth shall mourn. They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory. He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the one end of Heaven to the other.'

Imagine the tremendous scene! The Heavens

rending in their midst—the trump of God, long, loud, piercing the very tomb—the Son of Man, the same who of old stood before the bar of Pilate, now enthroned in cloud, descending the acknowledged and universal Judge. The earth and the sea give up their dead. The corruptible puts on the incorruptible. The angels—they who of old ministered unseen to the heirs of salvation—go from horizon to horizon upon their blessed errand, gathering the elect, welcoming, guiding, escorting, God's chosen. Alas, what shrieks issue from those they overpass! What maniacal, despairing cries!

Friends! Fathers! Brethren! Are you prepared for this dread day? Ye who press with your teeth Christ's symbolic body—who have in your hands the credit of his cause—who ought to be magnets attracting to his service—are you prepared? Parents, who have children entrusted to your care—who, at that awful day, must bid them a long farewell, unless like in character, you both go to a like place—are you prepared? Sinners, to whom time after time

the warning has been sounded—who must give account for every slighted opportunity, every resisted conviction, every rejected message—are you prepared? Have you pleas in readiness—sufficient pleas—pleas that will sustain your cause under the charges of a broken law, an accusing conscience, a rejected Saviour, a resisted spirit? *Now* is the time for such inquiry. *Then* you will stand or fall by your previous conduct—your character in the world—what you have been in these, the days of your probation. If you *fall*—no I will not—you must picture, yourself, your destiny.

Ye who in faith—with feeling—this day draw nigh to the commemorative table—remember that at the reappearing of your Master, there is to be a feast, a marriage supper, in comparison with which, all earthly festivals are tame and stupid—even this sacred solemnity shall seem but a nothing; where the glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, the noble army of martyrs, the holy church universal—crowned with a life

immortal—as the stars of Heaven for brilliancy and number—shall sit within the smile—bask in the radiance of the Lamb.

Who shall partake at this antitype feast? The holy: They who have washed their garments and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: They who are washed, who are justified, who are sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

Communicants, whose character is such—look forward! On earth you have many a corroding care, many a sorrow, many a temptation. You must struggle, perhaps, with poverty—you must languish, it may be, in obscurity—you must contend, it is certain, with a vile, a deceitful, a dangerous enemy within. Look forward then. Let your communion opportunity be season of anticipation. Does not the passenger on ship board, as he draws nigh the land of his home, imagine—draw pictures to himself—about that home? If he has opportunity to climb a mast, does he not stretch forward—strain his eyes—to catch more of the speck in the horizon which marks his haven?

Do you likewise. On the sea of the world a passenger—at the communion season elevated, aloft on the mast, as it were—extend your mind, strain all your powers, anticipating, taking foretaste of, the house not made with hands—the home—the marriage supper of the Lamb!

LECTURE III.

MATTHEW xxiv. 32—41.

"Now learn a parable of the fig-tree: When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not, until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

"Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken,

and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left."

The great prophecy spoken on the Mount of Olives, has been our subject for two Sunday mornings. We have seen how, in answer to the question "What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?" the Redeemer named events not to be mistaken for signs of his reappearing; foretold, as an eminent occurrence to precede this re-appearance, the announcement of the Gospel to the nations universally; premonished his audience of destruction to Jerusalem, of impostures on the part of false Messiahs, of protracted curse and disaster to the Holy Land—all to be previous to his coming to dissolve the world; and then, proceeded to disclose certain splendid and awful circumstances to attend this advent. At this point in the grand prophecy—the point where we last Sunday left it, the Saviour makes

APPLICATION OF HIS DOCTRINE.

The period of the world at which we live, is winter time. There was once a summer—

when our race was yet unfallen—when our first parents were in Paradise. That season, alas! is long gone by. Now is the season of the sear and yellow leaf. It is the period of storm and dreariness, of snow and cold. The Church is chilled: from time to time she is disturbed by tempests: her sun (the bright orb not of natural but of moral day) is distant; he throws upon her a radiance and heat which, however blessed, are far short of what she might enjoy were the source of light and warmth nearer.

By and by he *will* be nearer. Summer will again come round. For the promise is "Unto you that fear my name, shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall."* "Times of refreshing" are to come from the presence of the Lord when he shall send Jesus Christ.† That Redeemer reappearing—his presence will melt the frost, put an end to the storms, break the winter, under which his people have groaned.

How shall we know when this summer time

* Malachi, iv, 2. † Acts, iii, 19, 20.

is near? By what signs judge of the returning of the sun of righteousness? How, I answer, do you calculate the nearness of *literal* summer? Do you require an almanac? No. You know of certain events which precede the summer. Experience has taught you, that when the time of the singing of birds is nigh, the shrub grows green, the sap forces its way into the twig, new shoots appear on the tree. When in the course of any year you behold these tokens, you need no almanac—you want no monitor to tell you—you know of your own self that the genial season is at hand.

In a like way, you may judge of the coming of the figurative summer—the genial season of your Saviour's return to earth. For what was the tenor of that Saviour's prophecy? He named numerous antecedents to his reappearing—false Messiahs—commotions—the destruction of Jerusalem—the desolation of Judea—the universal preaching of his Gospel—and then, as he sat on Olivet, surrounded, it is like, with boughs beginning to blossom, he uttered "Now learn a parable of the fig tree. When its branch is yet

tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. So likewise when ye shall see all these things, know that it (the summer promised to the Church) is near, even at the doors."

"All these things."—Brethren, have you marked the fact that (with a single exception) every one of these things—the specified antecedents of the second coming, has already and before the birth of the oldest of us, come to pass? Does not history tell us of false Messiahs by the score; of commotions in nature and among nations, almost without number; of trials which have threatened the Church's constancy, too many to be counted? Is not Jerusalem and Judea desolate—their sun darkened—their people under curse? What prelude—what single antecedent, remains to be accomplished except that foretold in the saying "This Gospel must first be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations?" Good Lord, hasten this symptom! Make the times put forth *this* leaf of promise! And then—we ask it conditionally—we urge it, provided ourselves be of the number who shall be counted worthy to stand before

the Son of Man—come in thy brightness—descend in thy glory—give thy Church their summer!

The Divine prophet in the text pronounced further—

THE GENERATION HE ADDRESSED SHOULD SURVIVE ALL THE ANTECEDENTS TO HIS SECOND COMING.

Memorable his words! "This generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled." Who constituted that generation? I answer the seed of Abraham—the Jewish people. To them only (the sheep of the house of Israel) did Christ declare himself personally sent: In their land, on their own Mount of Olives, he was now sitting: To individuals of their number he uttered the whole of this prophecy; for though he spoke to his disciples, these disciples, one and all, were of the seed of Israel, the generation of Jacob.

But some man has it on his lips, that I mistake the signification of the word—that the term "generation" does not mean a "seed," or "progeny," or "people," but a single period in a

people's history, one gradation in a scale of genealogical descent, a single succession in a race or family. *This* I answer is the restricted sense of the word, usual in modern times. It is not the only sense in which it was used in the older English—the English of the Bible.* For what says the Book of Proverbs when it describes the proud? "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, yet are not cleansed from their filthiness." Are the proud confined to any one *period* or *succession* of men? What says the Book of Psalms? "A seed shall serve him. They shall be counted to

* Johnson assigns the sense "a succession" as an after-meaning, and in illustration of the sense "race" or "progeny," quotes from Shakspeare:

Y' are a dog.
———Thy mother's of my generation:
What's *she* if I be a dog?

Timon.

The barbarous Scythian,
Or he that makes his generation messes
To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom
Be as well neighboured.

King Lear.

the Lord for a generation." Did the Psalmist mean that the seed to serve the Messiah should consist of but a single succession of men? Did he not mean that they should be counted as a *people*, a *race*, a *progeny* to the Lord? Is not the word "generation" in the latter clause, entirely equivalent to the word "seed" in the former?

Similar criticism may be made upon the Greek expression*—the term in lieu of which "generation" stands in the English Bible. It imports sometimes a race, sometimes a succession in a race. To give to it, as it stands in this discourse of the Saviour, the more restricted meaning (which in native Greek writers is by no means the more usual) there is no sound reason.

When the Saviour of the world, sitting on a mount which commanded a view of the busy crowds who filled the streets of Jerusalem—all of them Jews—solemnly spake to the individuals about his person—all likewise Jews—"Verily I say unto you This generation shall not

* See this point fully made out in the Appendix.

pass away till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away;" his assurance was that "the seed of Israel" should never die off, never be merged in other races, up to the very time, when—the last antecedent come to pass—himself in the glory of his Father should come the second time.

It was no new prophecy Christ in such words made. For how fifteen hundred years before spake God by Moses? "Yet, for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them to destroy them utterly, to break my covenant with them."* How spake Amos? "I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob: I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve; yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth."† How spake Jeremiah? "Thus saith the Lord which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night; which divideth the sea when the waves thereof

* Leviticus, xxvi, 44. † Amos, ix, 9.

roar—The Lord of Hosts is his name—If those ordinances depart from before me, then *the seed of Israel* also *shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.* If Heaven above can be measured and the foundations of the Earth searched out beneath, I will also *cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done.*"*

Still if not *new*, this prophecy in the mouth of Christ was *strange.* Did he not just now—in the course of this very prophecy, say that Judea's sun should be darkened, her people be carried away captive into all nations, her soil and city (which in other cases keep up the unity and identity of a people) be left of Israel and be trodden down of the Gentiles? Did not the prediction seem inconsistent with itself—bear the marks of improbability on its very face? No other people ever ceased to be a distinct *commonwealth* yet continued to be a distinct *race*—have been carried away captive into all nations, yet not in the lapse of ages been swallowed up by, been amalgamated with, those nations. Must not then the scorners of the

* Jeremiah, xxxi, 35–37.

day, when they heard of this prophecy, have scoffed with fresh zeal, and very plausible reason—comparing the prediction of general expatriation with the prediction of unceasing continuance? Did they not ask in triumph—What was ever known to keep a race of men distinct from other races except a peculiar soil—community of country?

Spite of its improbability, our Lord's declaration was positive. He staked his cause—be it spoken with reverence—upon a most improbable prediction. How stands the case now? Eighteen hundred years have elapsed: all the antecedents to the second coming, one excepted, have come about. Has the prediction failed? Can the scoffer still charge it with absurdity? Are not the Jewish generation at this day exiles in all nations—in Europe—in America—in the recesses of Africa—in the heart of China—yet every where a separate, a marked, a continuing generation?

Take up, Christians! the hymn of the Psalmist. Acknowledge to Christ that he "hath set your foot upon a rock and established your go-

ings." Bless his holy name that in the midst of his most momentous promise, the promise faith might soonest stumble at, the promise of his personal reappearing, he hath—as though for the very purpose of making you feel how impregnable your rock—given you this standing miracle, this perpetual sign, the prediction concerning the race of Israel!

The Divine Prophet declared in the text yet further—THE DAY OF HIS REAPPEARING WAS HIDDEN and would take men by surprise.

Some seventeen hundred years after the creation, this apostate world of ours had become corrupt, even beyond the forbearance of the long suffering God. The end of all flesh drew nigh: a flood of waters was prepared: Jehovah said "My spirit shall not always strive with man; his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."

Of the great event to come—the deluge, Noah was forewarned of God. And this forewarning, he, in the interval before its happening, no doubt bore to his fellow men. He was "a preacher of righteousness;" and having in his

knowledge so great a fact, so awful intelligence, wherewith to back his admonitions, how can it be supposed he would fail to use it? In vain were his warnings—whatever the faithfulness with which they were given. He alone built an ark: his family alone, as the one hundred and twenty years drew towards their close, sought asylum from the coming deluge. When at last the windows of Heaven were opened and the fountains of the great deep were broken up, the flood that followed came upon the men of that day, as though it had never been announced beforehand. It found them, one and all, engrossed with business or pleasures, utterly unprepared, unthoughtful of the previous warning.

Shall it be so in the coming of the Son of Man? One might fear it may be, even without particular statement to that effect in Scriptnre. For we (unlike the men before the deluge) are not forewarned in regard to the *particular time* when vengeance shall arrive. God named one hundred and twenty years as the interval to elapse before the flood: he has not named the

number of years to elapse before the coming of the Son of Man. Nay, we are told expressly "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of Heaven. And as the days of Noah were, so also shall the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark—they knew not until the flood came and took them all away—so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be."

How many, at the present period of the world, answer the description, here given, of the men cotemporary with the flood! How characteristic of the great majority in this and every other congregation, that saying "They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage!" How easy to conceive the consternation—the despair—the unavailing beating of the breasts, that would take place among *you*, my hearers, should Christ now rend the Heavens and come down! You would tell me There is no danger—it is not time—the Heathen are not

yet brought in. Who has assured you, vain calculator, that the Heathen one and all, *are* first to be brought in? Christ has said that "in all the world the Gospel is to be preached"—that there is to be "a witness unto all *nations* before the end come;" but he has not said that every individual pagan is to be evangelized before the end come. Are you SURE that in this day—of missionary effort there are many or any nations that have not, in the sense intended, had the Gospel for a witness unto them? Are you not warned that there is no calculating that day, that when these things begin to come to pass, the Christian should lift up his head as for his salvation drawing nigh—that as a snare, as a thief in the night, as travail upon a woman with child, that day shall come upon all them that dwell on the Earth. Be wise: Be persuaded—ye who put off till to-morrow the business of to-day. Prepare to meet your God without postponement. You have no *warrant* to count upon an additional week, nay hour. It is possible your death may be sudden. It is certain your judgment will be.

The Divine Prophet prophesied further—A RENDING OF THE MOST INTIMATE RELATIONS at the day of his reappearing.

Various are the bonds by which men in this life are united. The Creator—to check our selfishness—to bring into play our social nature—has bound us together as husband and wife, father and child, brother and sister—ties we would not sever, without which life would be well nigh a burden.

Too often, however, these ties are unsanctified. Religion has hallowed only one of the parties to the bond. I throw my eye over the congregation before me, and mark scarce a family whose members are all like-minded on the important subject of piety. To the communion table, wives go up unsupported by the arm which every where else would sustain them—parents proceed unfollowed by their children. Here and in such like observances—the matters of religion, friends seem to think it but a light thing to separate and take different roads.

Do they remember this separation is but the prelude to another and a longer? Say, hus-

bands and wives, brothers and sisters, parents and children, do you reflect there is to be parting between you, everlasting parting—that unless like minded here, you do not go to a like home hereafter—that when Christ shall send forth his angels to gather together his elect from the four winds, they will take one and pass over the other?

Whether or not you realize the truth, it seems to be the very thing intended in that saying, "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left."

Ponder it, Brethren. Are you pious? How can you bear the thought of sundering, sundering forever, the tie which binds you to some unrepentant associate or relation? How is it you can be easy, without putting forth every allowable and proper effort to bring him to godliness? Why are you not instant in prayer, instant in endeavour, to have your wife, your husband, your sister, like minded with yourself? Think what it will be—the one taken, the other

left, by those angels who at the sounding of the trump go forth to gather God's chosen.

Unrepentant fellow men! Take to *your* bosoms this solemn warning of the text. Think what it will be, to be left, to be overpassed, by the angels of God—to see your friends owned, welcomed, admitted to the New Jerusalem, and be yourselves shut out—away from Christ, away from the pious, away eternally. In vain your prayers! In vain your frenzied cry for the intercession of your beloved! In that day no man may deliver his brother or make agreement unto God for him. It cost more to redeem the soul! The blood of Jesus Christ was the ransom price. If that has been trodden under foot—unused—neglected, what can avail then the intercession of mere fellow men? "Though those fellow men were Noah, Daniel, and Job, they should deliver neither son nor daughter. They should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness."

LECTURE IV.

MATTHEW xxiv. 42—xxv. 13.

"Watch, therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh.

"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that

he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"Then shall the kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage [supper]: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

In the great prophecy spoken on the Mount

of Olives, our Lord seems to have had in view two principal points. It was his object to keep the minds of his disciples *from excessive agitation on occasions*, and yet to keep them *in a state of habitual expectancy*. He would not, that their hopes should be raised and their souls lose their balance, at every new outbreak in the world—as though this were the signal for their Master's reappearing. And on the other hand, he was not willing that they should know how far off, the day of his second coming really was. He wished their minds to be constantly on the watch; their loins girded; their lamps trimmed; as men who knew not how soon their master might return.

With view to the former of these objects, Christ named various occurrences which must transpire before the end came. With view to the latter—the keeping his people expectant, he not only declared that the end of all things would come, like the deluge, on a sudden; but —it is the matter we have now to consider— compared his hearers to a man whose house was to be attacked, to persons in the capacity of

head servants, to virgins who went forth to meet a bridegroom.

The Saviour compared his disciples to A MAN WHOSE HOUSE WAS TO BE ATTACKED.

It sometimes happens a person receives intelligence that robbers intend violence to his home. The danger is but little if the intelligence is exact—if it names the particular time of night when the attack is meditated. Then the householder will be at that time on his guard—awake, down stairs, provided with arms.

But what if the intelligence is vague—if it is clear only as to the night—not as to the time of night? Do you say In that case there is greater reason for caution; the man then ought to sit up from evening till morning. You say unquestionable truth; but the man himself will perhaps be unlikely to think so. Did he know the exact hour, he would make it a point to be up at that hour. But, not having precise intelligence, he will watch too probably only for a *part* of the night. By and bye—fatigue overcoming him—sleep stealing on his senses—he

will be apt to think he has been unnecessarily alarmed—no robber is coming—at least it is not likely, attack will be made very soon—he will risk it, and take, for an hour at least, the repose he so greatly needs. Alas! what folly! That very hour, the robber comes; breaks open the house; makes way with the treasure.

There was danger that the disciples of Christ would fall into the error of this householder. Had they known at what exact period their Master would return to sit in judgment, they had been sure enough to make that period a time of watching. Not knowing this, and finding year after year that the second coming was delayed, they (too possibly) might be unprepared. Whence, the Saviour spake "Know this: If the good man of the house had known at what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Be ye ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh."

Let us, brethren of these later years, take to heart the admonition. Now, the night is far

spent: the day is at hand: the dawning of the sun of righteousness must be much nearer than it was at the time this prophecy was spoken. Who knows how soon the Heavens may rend and our Master descend? Who shall say the ineffable event may not occur within our lifetime—within this year? Let us not make the uncertainty a reason for postponement of preparation. That were the folly our Saviour has expressly cautioned us against. Because of this very fact—that we *are* uncertain—that in such an hour as we think not, the Son of man cometh—let us be always, from day to day, from minute to minute, making ready.

The Divine Prophet compared his disciples to PERSONS IN THE CAPACITY OF HEAD SERVANTS.

The number of disciples our Lord made during his personal residence on earth, amounted to at least five hundred. Some of these he constituted superiors to the rest. On a certain occasion, he chose twelve whom he called Apostles—who, after his ascension into Heaven, were to represent himself, and act as

governors over the remainder. All of them were servants: These, he placed in the condition of head-servants.

Now suppose a merely *human* being, is the proprietor of a large estate—has numerous slaves: that, being about to go to a foreign land, he sets one of the slaves over the rest—to allot their tasks—to dispense to them their food. What will be the conduct of such a man, on his return, it is not difficult to imagine. Has the servant made superior to the rest, been faithful?—husbanded his master's property—cared for the welfare of his fellow servants? He obtains commendation; nay, reward. His master promotes him; makes him his steward—agent in charge of all he has. Has the favored slave been, on the contrary, unfaithful to his trust? Has he been cruel; causelessly and wantonly inflicting the lash?—or wasteful; living on his master's substance; luxuriously inviting revellers to his master's mansion? Bitter to him is the day of his master's return! Surprised in his faithless courses, caught in his villany, he is sentenced to the scourge—his skin is cut asunder with lashes:

pronounced a hypocritical eye-servant, he gnashes his teeth in impotent spite.

There was possibility (for who of mortals is above the danger of falling away) that one or other of those, whom the master Jesus, about to travel to the right hand of his Father, had appointed to be stewards in charge of that house, the Church—might be perfidious; faithless to his unequalled trust. One of the apostles, or, if none of the first apostles, some at least of their successors—the overseers of the Church in these later ages—might attempt to "lord it" over his brethren; to persecute; to smite with the sword, such as ventured to think for themselves: Ministers might be usurping, dronish, luxurious. Timely then, and called for, that solemn speech of Christ—"Who then is a faithful and wise servant whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when come, shall find so doing: He shall make him ruler over all his goods. But if that servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; shall begin to smite his fellow-servants,

and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day he looketh not for him, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Terrific warning! Well may pastors make it matter of meditation. Well, in view of it, may our fellow-servants in the master's house—they to whom we are as stewards, to give meat—pray for us that neither inconsideration, nor unrenewedness of heart, nor the temptations incident to our calling, may sink us in the abyss appointed for the hypocrites!

The Divine Prophet compared his disciples to VIRGINS WHO WENT FORTH TO MEET A BRIDEGROOM.

When, in old time, a bride went first to the house of her husband, the event was celebrated with abundant pomp and circumstance. It was in full dress, attended by instruments of music, and surrounded by laughing groomsmen, that the groom conducted to his house his new married wife. Nor was this the whole. The habita-

tion he had prepared was not reached by the party, without an addition to their number. To welcome the bride to the home of their kinsman, a number of his virgin cousins came forth to meet the couple on the way. Having put all things in readiness at the mansion of their relative—the bridegroom—they (as the bridal party drew near) advanced halfway or thereabout; and there, with flambeaux in their hands, waited the coming up of the new married couple.

In more than a bridegroom's glory, Christ Jesus is about to come to our world—his own, his rightful mansion. He is to appear in matchless splendor—clothed with the resurrection body—his approach announced by the trump of God—his person surrounded by superhuman groomsmen, the hosts of holy angels.

This incomparable bridegroom, disciples *await*. True, unlike the virgins in one respect, they do not *go forth* to meet their Lord: They do not issue from this sublunary world. Still, they *look to meet* their more than kinsman. The mass of mankind live on ignorant or uncon-

cerned: disciples on the contrary are expectant. Like the virgins, desirous to greet with welcomes Him that cometh—to share his glory—to enter into his joy—they embody themselves into a company, the Church; they bear about them that sacred lamp, the Christian profession.

Not all the virgins were wise; only *five* kept themselves in a state of preparation. The rest, improvident, shunning every avoidable trouble, took lamps, it is true—started with those lamps not empty of oil; but alas! failed to keep them replenished; carried no oil wherewith to feed them.

Too true a portrait of Christ's disciples. Of those who by baptism have entered into covenant with God—of those even who by communicating from time to time renew that covenant—many a one is unready for the appearing of the bridegroom Jesus. Though their lamps, when they set out on the Christian walk, might have been supplied, now, alas! they are empty. Their profession is hollow; a sounding brass; a tinkling cymbal.—Mark what happened to the virgins. The bridegroom tarried—*they* grew

tired—drowsiness overcame them—when lo! at midnight, there was a great cry heard, (joyous in the tones of its crier, joyous to the hearts of the five who were wise, but ah! far from joyous to the foolish,) "Behold the bridegroom cometh: Go ye out to meet him." The virgins who had oil, needed only to trim their lamps; but the rest, the foolish, were utterly confounded; knew not what to do, which way to turn.

Fellow-disciples! There are some among you (it is probable) not in a state of preparation, and not so self-ignorant as to suppose themselves in a state of preparation. The language of their inmost bosom is "I am not what I ought to be. My religion is fearfully empty. But I have no thought of continuing such as I am. Only let me satisfy some pressing calls which now are upon me: let me get through this or that business; then I will live more faithfully." As such thoughts pass through his mind, a man is not insensible to an inward warning: something whispers Your "then" may never arrive!

Similar, it is like, was the state of mind in the virgins—they intended to slumber for but a few minutes. Resembling the five foolish in such respect, may you not resemble them in other respects? May you not, like the virgins, be taken by surprise? May not the bridegroom *we* profess to await, this day be revealed from Heaven; like lightning shine forth from the East even unto the West; descend, with the voice of the Archangel, with the trump of God? Remember, the unprepared virgins resorted in vain to *expedients*. While at the approach of the groom, the five wise had only to resort to their vessels, the foolish—confounded—stung with shame and disappointment—not knowing what to do, which way to look—turned at last to their companions, piteously imploring, begging abjectly "Give us of your oil." What could the more provident do? Were they to change places with their pitiable associates; to give their own store (no more than a sufficiency) to others? It was not to be thought of. Yet alas! before the improvident could replenish their lamps and reach the door

of the joyous mansion, the opportunity was gone—the door was shut—the reply to their piteous petition "Lord, lord, open to us," was —cold and forbidding—"I never knew you!"

When the Heavenly Bridegroom shall come, the unprepared among mankind—hurried and helpless—filled with shame and despair—will cry to the rocks to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. This is not all. Did the five foolish know the five wise, formerly their companions, to be making merry within the mansion from which they were excluded? The unprepared of men—the impenitent—will behold Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, entering into the Kingdom of God, and be themselves shut out. Yes, hearers, your own flesh and blood: the child you lost ere it had become a transgressor: the pious wife whose head reposed upon your bosom: the mother that nursed you: the father you remember with such loving reverence: before your very eyes may pass to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Christ, within your sight, may take them to his presence-chamber. You, shut out, in outer darkness,

sinking to Tophet, plead, but plead in vain. You curse your folly—you abjectly implore. The judge replies "I never knew you." From day to day, from age to age, unendingly, you are an exile from Paradise—lost—a cast-away!

LECTURE V.

MATTHEW XXV. 14—30.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents, went, and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one, went, and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time, the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents, came, and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents; behold, I have gained besides them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been

faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents, came, and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent, came, and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went, and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed? Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath, shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Our subject in four preceding discourses has been the great prophecy recorded in the 24th and 25th chapters of St. Matthew. We have seen our Lord announcing to his hearers that several occurrences were to precede his second appearing—enforcing upon them the truth that his return to earth would be sudden—comparing his apostles to a man whose house was to be attacked, to persons employed as head servants, to ten virgins who went forth to meet a bridegroom.

In the text he speaks a parable, which with the moral it was intended to convey, we now submit to your thoughts.

In ancient times, the holding of slaves (whether right or wrong) was general. And, masters who from any cause found it difficult to give full employment to their bondmen, are said to have been accustomed to entrust them with some small amount of capital. They gave them a sum of money, larger or smaller, and bade them trade with it for the benefit of their owner.

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Such was the conduct of the proprietor described in the text. About to travel into foreign parts, he broke up his establishment—aware that in his absence his servants would lack occupation, he called them to his presence and entrusted to one five talents, to another two, to another one—to every man according to his several ability.

A few weeks after our blessed Lord spake this parable, he departed from the world. He ascended unto his Father and our Father, to his God and our God. It is true he had no household to break up—he did not formally summon his servants and impart to them literal talents. Nevertheless, we can be at no difficulty in determining, it was himself and the people who compose his church he intended to shadow out, in this parable, under the image of a householder and his servants. Jesus Christ is not only the Redeemer of the Church, but its Creator. He is God, the God of providence; and to him every individual of mankind is indebted for whatever qualities or advantages he enjoys. Are we wealthy? Are we blessed with intel-

lect? Do we possess influence or high standing? It is a talent, as it were—a *boon* bestowed not so much for our own benefit, as for the benefit of our master's cause. It is a capital—stock in trade—conferred upon us with the charge, unspoken but implied, "Occupy till I come."

Men of blessings! take to heart the truth. Too apt we are, to account our possessions *our own;* to look upon them as the earning of our own labours—as the result of chance—or, if as gifts of God at all, as gifts outright; forgetting the statement of Holy Scripture that we *hold in trust* the bounties we call our own—that we are stewards for God—that our blessings are made over to us for the sake of religion, for the sake of our fellow-men, not less than for the sake of ourselves.—Whether it be wealth, or intellect, or influence, that constitutes the Christian's talent; let him solemnly charge it on his soul to trade with this capital in the name of his master—to miss no opportunity—fail in no effort—for rendering his gifts serviceable to Christ's cause, to Christ's Church, to the glory of Christ's name.

After the proprietor mentioned in the text, had left his mansion and set out upon his journey, the servants were under their own control. Two of them were diligent. They traded industriously, and (as commonly happens to industry) with success. He that had received five talents, in due time increased the sum to ten: he that had received two, made two more. Not so, he that had received one talent. Selfish, and unwilling to labour where the profit would not be his own, he went and digged in the earth and hid his Lord's money.

What are we to learn from this part of the story? Laying stress on the circumstance that two of the servants were diligent, while only the third was lazy, may we say that among mankind at large, they who improve their gifts are, in comparison with those who neglect them, as two to one? Alas! brethren, this were a view of human nature, which (however charitable it may seem) were hardly true. Christ stated things according to the reality; and is it really the case that only a third part of mankind are unfaithful to the Heavenly Benefactor?

Nor yet, though the recipients of the larger sums were the exemplary servants, and he that received the smallest trust, the unworthy one, could the Saviour have meant that in the world at large the poorest are the worst, the most abundantly gifted the most faithful. For—if it sometimes happens that the less blessed of human beings reason in themselves with folly, imagine that because they cannot do much, they can do *nothing*, and so are content to sit down, and fold their arms, and make no exertion in behalf of the Redeemer—it happens also, not unfrequently, that the most zealous, the most active and laborious in a congregation of Christ's people, are found among the comparatively mean—the classes the world looks down upon.

The important circumstance in this part of the Saviour's parable, is the fact that the third servant went and digged in the earth and *hid* his lord's money. His one talent was as capable of increase—the increase expected of him, as the greater sums of the others. He, as well as the others, might have requited his master's

confidence, attested his own fidelity, gotten for himself the happy consciousness of well doing. It was his own fault, the consequence of his sloth an selfishness, that he failed to deserve his owner's commendation.

So, brethren, it is with us. Many of our number are not eminently blessed. Some are poor: some ignorant: not a few are obscure and uninfluential. Are such exempted from responsibility? Are they able to do nothing for their master? May they bury in the earth—leave entirely unimproved—the small measure of capacity for good they possess? Alas! it is the error of too many. God forbid, it should prove in the day of award to be *your* error, ye that are less blessed among the people of my charge! Rather let that, in the awful hour, be spoken of you, which was the praise of the poor woman who poured upon her Master's head the costly spikenard—"She hath done what she could!" Yes: However small, the weight of your example—however feeble, your power to remonstrate with the heedless sinner—however little, the amount you are able to be-

stow in alms—do "what you can." Then, though your contribution to the Master's service be but a mite—it will not be forgotten. It will save you from the dreadful charge of having digged in the earth and hid your Lord's talent. It will gain for you, from him who seeth in secret, and seeth the things which in man's eye are insignificant—public, splendid, glorious, reward!

Long time, the Proprietor mentioned in the text, continued in foreign parts. By and by however (for the longest term has its end) he returned to his mansion. To celebrate the event, the estate was to witness a merry-making —the great hall to be illuminated—the tenants to be admitted to share the festivities. Preparations were going on—and meanwhile, the three servants who had been entrusted with sums of money, received a summons to the presence of the proprietor. Confident and smiling was the manner of the first.—"Thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold I have gained, beside them, five talents more." "Well done! good

and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things: I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

The address of the servant who had received two talents, was similar to that of the servant who had had five. So likewise was the *greeting* with which he was honoured. The very same "Well done"—the very same invitation to enter into his master's joy—the very same promotion to be ruler over many things with which the first agent was received—was bestowed also upon this humbler person.

How comforting! Sometimes when we behold highly gifted individuals doing great deeds for the cause of Christ—contributing large sums of money for its extension—writing ably in its defence—exerting powerful influence in its behalf—we feel our own littleness rather painfully: we exclaim 'Enviable the privilege of such! Would to God, ourselves were as highly favoured!' My brethren, if as *faithful*, we shall be as highly REWARDED. Yes: When the great Proprietor of Christians, returns to his

estate, our globe—when the Lord of all reckoneth with the men he hath entrusted with gifts—every man shall receive—not according to the amount of gifts which was entrusted to him, not according to the amount of good he has been able to effect, but according to his *fidelity*. Have we employed our poor parts diligently? Have we given freely of our little store? Has our influence, such as it is, been faithfully used? To our surprise, perhaps to the surprise of multitudes about us, we shall find ourselves greeted as cordially by our reappearing Lord, advanced to as high a post, seated as near our Saviour, as the men whom on earth we almost envied—they whose labours for the Master seemed so glorious.

Brethren, if to the men of humble gifts it is comforting to observe that the servant who had but four talents was made equal at his master's return to the servant who had ten; to all it should be comforting to observe how rich, how far surpassing their deserts, was the reward of *either*. They were welcomed: "Well done" was the word from the master's mouth. They

were permitted to join in their owner's festivities, to enter into their lord's joy—not so much like servants, as like freedmen, companions, friends. They were advanced—were promoted to be rulers over many things—their former trust giving place to a greater.

Was it to picture forth the conduct himself will pursue when he re-appeareth and reckoneth with mankind, that Christ drew this portrait? Did he hold out the hope, that cordial acknowledgment, public welcoming, introduction to his own joys, advancement to trusts higher than those had on earth—trusts superhuman and angelic—would be the portion of his people when himself should come the second time? Rejoice, my soul! Glorious, the prize thus set before thee. Rouse all thy energies to attain it.

The reckoning of our parable was not finished when the two faithful servants had received their owner's commendation. Next came the slothful, the selfish servant. Did the consciousness of unworthiness make him penitent? No.

It made him insolent. "Thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: I was afraid and went and hid thy talent in the earth: there thou hast that is thine."

Some may say, the Saviour, by inserting this particular in his story, meant to intimate, that when himself shall return to take account with men, the faithless among his people will burst forth with blasphemies, with imputations on his dealings with mankind.

It is hardly conceivable. That in that dread scene—in sight of the glory of God—in view of the lake of fire—men will vent their blasphemies, who can imagine? Very possibly however, men in that awful day may *feel* as the faithless servant did—dogged, insolent, blasphemous—even though they may not dare to *utter* imputations upon God. For how is it now? Is there any period in a man's life, when his feeling towards God takes so nearly the shape of hostility, as when—the truth brought home to his soul—he opens his eyes to his ill desert and danger? Does not conviction unaccompanied by

conversion, commonly make a man more violent, more rampant, in his wickedness, than he was before? My brethren, there will be conviction unaccompanied by conversion, in the day of our Lord's reappearing. Conversion will be impossible: conviction will be forced upon the bosom by the whole scene. So that we may well believe that, in that day, the soul of the sinner, though it will see his sentence to be just, will not *admit* it to be so—his bosom will rankle with impotent but raging hate—if he do not curse God, it will be only because he dares not. There will be one hell within him, as well as another before him—his breast a battle ground of passions impotent as respects their object, but more potent than fiends to lacerate their subject.

Miserable was the lot of the parable servant. He was despoiled of his insolent pretence: "Thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not and gather where I have not strawed? Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then, at my coming, I should have received mine own with usury." The

unimproved talent was transferred to one of the diligent servants: the worthless fellow was thrust out of the mansion of his master, excluded from the brilliant hall prepared for the festivity, and left in the darkness outside to gnash his teeth in unavailing rage.

If it was only to give completeness or embellishment to his parable, that our Saviour represented the talent of the faithless servant as *transferred* to one of the others, we may not say this of the remaining circumstances—the fact that the worthless trustee was despoiled of his insolent pretence—the fact that he was cast into outer darkness. No. Every thing leads to the belief that when the judgment hour shall come, every pretext the impenitent man now urges—every plea he rests on—first one, and then another, of his refuges—will (alike to his own view, and to the view of his fellow beings) appear utterly void, altogether empty—whence perhaps it is said "many of them that sleep in the dust of the Earth, shall awake to shame and everlasting *contempt*." The vanity of their reliances, the emptiness of their pretexts,

not less than the unveiling of their secret sins, will expose them to the derision of men and evil angels.

Equally express is all Scripture to the point that, in the day of Christ's reappearing, the faithless of the Church shall be separated from the faithful, separated from the Redeemer. They are to be punished with "everlasting destruction away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power." The New Jerusalem, the city where is to be no more curse, and in which runneth the pure river of the water of life, is the place where the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be, and where the Lamb's servants shall serve him—the place pictured in the text as the festive hall of the returned proprietor. We are expressly told, inside this New Jerusalem there shall "in no-wise enter any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie."

In view of all this—with your eyes open—choose, fellow-men, your portion. Say, whether your lot shall be with the faithful servants, or with the faithless—whether in the inner light,

or in the outer darkness—whether in Christ's company, or in the company of outcast fiends. Choose *to-day* because to-morrow the Master may return. As a snare shall that day come upon all them that dwell on the earth.

LECTURE VI.

MATTHEW XXV. 31—46.

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or

naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

On five past Sundays, the successive portions of Christ's great warning about his second coming, have been set before the minds of the congregation. We come to-day to the last—a portion most momentous and deserving the most serious thought.

The passage, is a picture of some of the circumstances which shall attend the re-appearing of our Lord. It tells us that when he comes in his glory, all his holy angels, the ten thousand times ten thousand who minister in his presence and go forth upon his errands, shall surround his person—that he is to sit upon a throne, something perhaps like the cloud* which on the day of his ascension received him out of the sight of his wondering disciples—that before him all nations shall be gathered, the quick and the dead, the negro and the white, Adam and the whole of his descendants—that notwithstanding this multitude which no man can number, his eye shall distinguish every individual; the shepherd whose flock consists of goats intermingled with sheep, dividing the one class of animals from the other, with no greater ease, no more unerringly, than He will divide the holy from the wicked—the former to his right, the latter to his left.

Wonderful declaration! To us it seems as though the classes of mankind were innumera-

* Acts i, 9—11.

ble. If there are some decidedly bad, and some decidedly good, there are others (we are apt to imagine) neither the one nor the other. Many of those we know, appear to our eye so different at different times, seem so indeterminate, look so much like neutrals, we cannot easily conceive they ought to be ranked either as good or bad, either with the sheep or with the goats. Nevertheless, the text is express. It does not deny that the varieties of human character are numerous—innumerable. It does not forbid the supposition that among those on the right hand, some may be destined to a lot more blessed than that reserved for others on the same side; nor that among those on the left, some may be more ill-deserving than those who on the whole rank with them. But it *does* represent every man as in the main either GOOD or BAD. If other parts of Scripture—those which speak of the eventual allotments of mankind—represent these allotments as in number only two—eternal blessedness and eternal curse, this portion of the Holy volume, wherein we have on record the Judge's statement how in judgment he will

conduct himself, represents him as acknowledging none of mankind for neutrals—dividing the whole race into bad and good. Alas! how many, spite of this statement, flatter themselves that though not rewardable, they are not, punishable! How many build their hopes for futurity upon the thought that they are too harmless to be condemned, although they admit they are hardly holy enough to be acquitted.

Brethren, let none of *us* thus mistake. We have, every one of us, a character. We are, each, either penitent or impenitent, either holy or unholy, either fit for the society of the sheep or fit for the society of the goats. To which of these two classes we belong, may be uncertain to our fellow men—it may be uncertain even to ourselves—but it is not uncertain to our Judge. We are for him or against him—which of the two the great day will infallibly determine.

In the midst of the imposing scene—the Judge enthroned—the holy angels in attendance—the assembled race of man arraigned—

the Saviour is to speak. Joyous his accents to those on the right—"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

The beings thus addressed, as the blessed of the Creator, were many of them little accustomed to receive addresses betokening consideration. They were, not a few of them, in the days of their pilgrimage, low and poor—of the class the world despises. How refreshing to their spirits, to be thus owned and welcomed, to be publicly styled "the blessed of God!"

Not only comforting, but fit to excite in our souls a holy ambition, is the address to be uttered by the Judge. It represents his sheep not only as the blessed of his Father, but as to inherit a kingdom, the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

What means this? Is each true follower of Christ to have dominions—a territory—over which he may exercise regal sway? It were rash to assert it—because the word "Kingdom" as used in Scripture, imports not only

a king's territory but a king's condition, regal dignity, royal felicity.* This latter—kingly condition—is often in Holy writ described as belonging to the Redeemed. They are spoken of as "kings and priests unto God." The promise is express "If we suffer with him, we shall *reign* with him:" "They which receive abundance of grace and of the free gift of righteousness, shall also *reign* in life."

Splendid assurance! It may be more than mere imagery; for what is there absurd, in supposing that the holy may be destined to such trusts, such vice-royal functions, in the empire of the Universe, as would make the name applied to them, the name "king," more than a figure? But at any rate—though the "reigning" or "kingdom" promised to Christians, be only an image—how significant it is—how fraught with meaning! From his childhood up, every man thinks of the condition of a king as the height of good fortune: regal dignity has been, from the beginning of the world, the grand object of ambitious desire: to secure it, trea-

* Luke, xix, 12, 15.

sure has been lavished, armies have been raised, countries have been deluged with blood. No wonder. A king, men picture to their minds, as surrounded with every species of enjoyment —as not only powerful, but admired, courted, looked up to—as able to command treasure and service—as dwelling amid luxuries, answerable to no earthly superior, with no wish he cannot gratify.

Such condition—something like this enviable estate—must be the kingdom or kingship prepared for the redeemed from the foundation of the world—prepared for *you*, true followers of the Lord! Ponder the idea—dwell upon the thought—till your soul, grateful to the promiser, inflamed with holy ambition, raised above the world, shall resemble that merchant seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, that he might make that pearl his own.

To the gracious welcoming wherewith he will greet his saints, Christ is to add the reason for that welcome, "Come ye blessed of my Fa-

ther—for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: sick, and ye visited me: in prison, and ye came unto me." Why is it that the Judge will mention to his people only *such* fruits of faith?" Will the blessed have practised no virtues worthy to be named except deeds of mercy?—Undoubtedly they will have practised other virtues. Undoubtedly these other virtues will be mentioned to them. The Saviour will name the merciful deeds of his followers, not because no others will at his second appearing be worthy of acknowledgment, but by way of *sample*—or to intimate perhaps which of the holy deeds of his people he most highly prizes.

The great point here to be noticed, is this: Christ identifies his people with himself. At the unexpected declaration "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat," the multitude on the right are surprised. Multitudes of them never before had had sight of the Master's blessed

person: only a few—the Marys, Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, and the like—ever had *opportunity* to minister to the Saviour's bodily wants: the most lived upon earth either before the Master assumed a body or after he had ascended with that body to the right hand of the Father. "Can there be mistake?" they ask within their bosoms—then exclaim with wonder "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee; or thirsty and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in; or naked and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?" The King stretches forth his arm—points to the mass on the right—smilingly announces "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

The same doctrine—that Christ counts his people as himself—this Redeemer hath uniformly taught. "Whoso receiveth you, receiveth me," was his language to the disciples who companied with him in his tribulations. And when, after those tribulations were finished,

and himself had ascended into Heaven, he, amid a light above the brightness of the sun, appeared for a moment to the zealot of Tarsus, his speech was worded, "Saul! Saul! why persecutest thou ME?" The persecution intended for his followers, was regarded by the Redeemer as persecution to Himself.

Taught by all this, be heedful: Christians! beware how you maltreat, or despise, or neglect the other members of Christ's body: do not contemn them, because they are obscure—or laugh at them, because they have peculiarities—or decry them, because they, in any respect, are not to your taste. Conceal their faults: sympathize with their griefs: rejoice at their success: behold in them the image of your Saviour. Then—when that Saviour shall be revealed from Heaven—when you meet at his right hand the individuals of his fold—your ears shall be blessed with that address—better to your soul than aught else conceivable—"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto my brethren, ye have done it unto me!"

Our Lord represents himself as turning to a task less grateful. He addresses the miserable, quailing, conscience-condemned crowd on the left. Not such, now, are his tones—not such his words, as those the righteous had heard. "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels"—is the terrific sentence. No earthly judge, no human doom, ever carried to culprit's bosom such hopelessness, such sense of desolation. It is the curse of the Eternal—a doom which consigns to such torment as no figure but that of fire, everlasting fire, can suitably portray—torment in company with fiends, with the Devil and his angels.

Sinful men, who is to speak this sentence? The loving Saviour: he who hath no pleasure at all that the wicked should die: he who, to save you from this fate, surrendered himself to death, the death of the cross. Do you say the warning is but a threat? Who spake the warning? Was it mere man—one who might deceive? It was the Holy and True: It was the Judge himself. You stake your salvation—you

bottom your hope—you venture your soul—upon the possibility that the Messiah may break his truth, that the Christ may flinch from his word. Possibility, did I call it? It is blasphemy; it is absurdity.

Remarkable it is, that among the sins which the Judge mentions as specimens of the ground of condemnation, none are sins of commission. They are all negative things—omissions—failures; and these, in matters not of justice or honesty, but of mercy.

After the sentence "Depart, ye cursed," one looks to hear of some *enormity*, some of those offences which men unite to deem atrocious. The doom is terrific: how natural would it seem to vindicate its severity by the charge of heinous immorality. Not so however: as the ground of the awful "Depart ye cursed," the Judge is to add simply "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not."

Do not some here deem themselves safe, because (as they say) they have done no harm? Have not persons present, when urged to become new men, had it in their hearts to answer Whom have I defrauded? When have I been dishonest? What crime can be charged against me? My hearer, it needs not crime—what men call crime—to condemn your soul: "Depart" is to be the doom to men against whom no flagrant immorality, nothing enormous or atrocious, can be charged. Have you *done good*, as well as avoided crime? Have you been merciful, as well as just? Have you cherished Christ's people—had sympathy with the Saviour's sheep—counted the pious your brethren? If not, it may be said in reference to you "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:" to you may be addressed the doom "Depart:" your portion may be everlasting exclusion from the presence of the Lord.

Hearers who are not religious! let me, in concluding this exposition of Christ's great pro-

phecy concerning his return to earth, put to you a solemn question. Respectfully, affectionately, yearningly, it is urged: Oh that it may be pondered! ARE THESE THINGS TRUE? If the warning is true--not an imposture, why act you not upon the truth? Why fail your souls to prepare for the great meeting between you and your Judge?—Do you say The time is yet far off? This is more than you know: "The day cometh as a thief in the night:" "When they shall say Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them." "The men of the days of Noah knew not until the flood came and took them all away: so also shall the coming of the Son of Man be."—Do you say The Lord will relent—He may be milder than he has led us to believe? Then, the Lord will be untrue to his word: then, the holy must cease to put full confidence in his *promises*—the angels who surround him, may hide their heads in shame—the fiends may exult, may cry in triumph, He hath said it, yet hath he not done it!

Tell me—no, tell not me, tell your own bosom—what is your reliance? wherein is your safety? what the foothold for your soul?—Is there any foothold? Is not your hope built upon emptiness?

APPENDIX.

THE word γενεα, at Matth. xxiv, 34, translated "generation," is derived from the obsolete γενω, "I generate;" and (like most substantives ending in *a*, Buttmann's Gr. Gram. by Robinson, § 119, 7) signifies properly the act of the verb, *a generating* or *begetting*. Donnegan's Lexicon.

As its secondary signification, the word γενεα has the meaning *a race*, the offspring *generated* or *begotten*. In this sense—which among native Greek writers seems to have been the PREVAILING one—(Krebs. Annotationes e Josepho. in Matth. i, 17: Læsner. Annotationes e Philone. in Matth. i, 17: Winer's Idioms of the New Testament, p. 24)—the expression occurs in passages quoted by Donnegan, Parkhurst, (Rose's ed.,) Robinson, and Schleusner.

Repeatedly—times without number—does γενεα in the sense "race" occur in the Septuagint—Psalms xii, 7; xiv, 5; xxiv, 6; lxxiii, 15; cxii, 2—in most of

which places the term is used of the righteous, such as are born of God, the race of the godly; in the last of them it is the synonyme of "seed" in the corresponding clause. So in a variety of other places—Esther ix, 28, for זרע seed; Num. xiii, 23, 29, for יליד offspring; Gen. xxxi, 3; xliii, 7; Num. x, 30, for מולדת kindred; Lev. xxv, 41; Jerem. viii, 3, for משׁפחה family; Lev. xx, 18, for עם people.

As New Testament examples of the same meaning in the word, the passages Matth. xvii, 17; Luke xi, 50, 51; xvi, 8; xvii, 25; Acts ii, 40; Philippians ii, 15, may be mentioned; for though in these passages (except perhaps the last) the sense "race" is not absolutely necessary, it best accords with the connection. At Philippians ii, 15, the English Bible has "nation:" had it given the same rendering to γενεα at Matth. xxiv, 34, many difficulties would have been obviated to common readers.